

December 30, 2005

Re: Radine Kawahine Kamakea-Ohelo

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter in support of Radine Kawahine Kamakea-Ohelo. I have had the privilege of knowing Ms. Kamakea-Ohelo since the summer of 2000, when I was a college student volunteering at the Waimanalo Health Center (WHC), where she was then Executive Director. I also worked at WHC, directly under Ms. Kamakea-Ohelo, full-time during the summers of 2001 and 2002, so I can testify to her personal attributes with a high degree of confidence. Ms. Kamakea-Ohelo has touched my life in many ways, and it is my sincere hope that sharing my experiences with her will help paint a clearer picture of the kind of person she really is.

At the Waimanalo Health Center, Ms. Kamakea-Ohelo was a gracious leader who was widely respected and admired by her employees. Affectionately known by her staff as "Aunty Kawahine", her warm smile and frequent laughter lit up meetings and hallway conversations, and her easygoing personality and sense of "aloha" were contagious. Each monthly staff meeting began with a *pule*, or Hawaiian prayer, led by Aunty Kawahine or Frank Kawaikapu Hewett giving thanks for the many blessings bestowed on the center, its patients and its staff. Surely it was easy to forget at times that Aunty Kawahine was the Executive Director. Aunty Kawahine was the glue that held WHC together. She was able to bridge gaps between people like me (I was raised in Makiki and graduated from Iolani School) and those from different backgrounds. She would often stay at WHC late into the evenings, helping us with grant proposals or working tirelessly to prepare for events like the annual Waimanalo Health Fair. On these nights, she would frequently often open her home to us for dinner. Her work was truly a labor of love.

Aunty Kawahine was not only a skilled and effective leader, but a kind and caring person as well. As a lowly volunteer filing charts that first summer, I recall my surprise when the Executive Director knew my name. She would frequently stop to talk to me and the other volunteers and asked how our work at the health center was going. Every year at the end of the summer, Aunty Kawahine organized a farewell luncheon for all the summer volunteers and employees, most of whom were premedical students. She presented each of us with small gifts hand-picked by her children and expressed her hope that our work at the health center would spark in us a desire to serve the underprivileged and/or Native Hawaiians in our future careers. Indeed she inspired many of us, including myself, to do exactly that. I sometimes return to WHC to visit friends who still work there, and the sentiment among the group is mutual – it's just not the same without her.

For the last few years, Aunty Kawahine has been a great inspiration and guiding light in my professional path to becoming a physician, and the impact she has had on my life is not easily put into words. She is a kind, compassionate and generous person with a heart of gold. Whenever I need help, she has always been there for me, whether it was for a business writing project for a class at UCLA or helping me apply to medical school. She

is a strong woman, yet remains humble and grounded, never afraid to share with us her stories of being *hapai* (pregnant) and living on the beach. Having no formal education or training, she and Aunty Mabel Spencer founded the health center and built it into a pillar of the Waimanalo community. Already a mother of four, Aunty Kawahine took two *hanai* (adopted) daughters into her home and continues to raise them with love as her own children.

I am now a fourth-year student at Harvard Medical School, where I will graduate with an M.D. degree in June. I have kept in touch with Aunty Kawahine and her family and watched her children grow into fine young adults. Even through this difficult time in her life, she has remained humble, grounded, upbeat and positive -- a solid rock to all those who are fortunate enough to have her as a part of their lives. I remain close friends with a group of other young adults who worked under Aunty Kawahine and are now becoming medical professionals and educators, and we have nothing but the fondest memories of her. Should you need any further information, please contact me at (808)782-4433 or at brandon_lee@hms.harvard.edu.

Sincerely,



Brandon W. Lee